

some incredible Asian Americans, who ran markets, who ran restaurants, who were small business leaders and continued to work during this crisis and ultimately paid the price with their lives. But they also, in addition to facing the pandemic, have had to face a range of hate and racism against them during this time period.

According to Stop AAPI Hate, nearly 3,800 incidents of violence and hate against AAPI individuals were reported nationwide over a year since the pandemic. And sadly—sadly—women made up over half of this. Nearly 68 percent of the reported incidents of violence against Asian Americans were against Asian-American women. This must stop.

And it is very important that we think about how a fraction of these statistics that are the reported information—how many more are out there that go unreported.

My State, the State of Washington, has the seventh largest Asian-American population and the third largest Pacific Islander population in the Nation. And like the rest of the United States, we have seen an increase in these incidents.

In fact, in 2020, the State had the third highest rate of hate crimes targeted against AAPI community members. That is why I am for getting a full slate of people over at the Department of Justice, including Kristen Clarke, to deal with hate crimes. Why? Because my State is plagued by these issues, and we are not going to tolerate it. We are going to fight back and make sure that we have the infrastructure in place to recognize these things.

Just this past February, a teacher driving in the Seattle International District was assaulted with a sock containing a rock. The attacker was charged with felony assault but not a hate crime.

We have been told that there are widespread reports of AAPI elders and women throughout Western Washington who have been verbally harassed and randomly physically assaulted. The King County Coalition Against Hate and Bias is collecting information about these attacks. But we know that there have been many throughout many communities in our State.

Just a few months ago, a woman in King County and her two children were accosted with a man yelling, screaming at them just to get out—“Get out! Get out!” And a man was captured on video in downtown Seattle attacking an Asian couple, spitting on them, slapping the man’s face, and yelling at them: “It’s your fault.” So we know these incidents are happening.

In fact, just a week or so ago, I participated in a roundtable of the Asian American-Pacific Islander community from my State to talk about the need for this national legislation and why it is so important we have community-based solutions, which include more cultural education to teach our chil-

dren the history of the Asian-American community in the United States, mental health support in multiple languages, investing in community groups, and this legislation that was passed today that will give us better tools to prosecute those individuals who participate in hate crimes.

This bill would designate a point person within the U.S. Department of Justice to expedite the review of hate crimes and continue to work with all of us.

It requires the Attorney General to issue guidance to State, local, and Tribal law enforcement to establish an online hate crime reporting and data collection system. These are all important tools.

So I, again, want to thank our colleagues, and I want to also thank Senator BLUMENTHAL. His bipartisan amendment would authorize the Attorney General to provide grants to States and localities to better train law enforcement on identifying, investigating, and reporting hate crimes and to operate State-run hate crime reporting hotlines.

So this legislation will help us in shining a very bright light on an alarming rise in violence against the Asian American-Pacific Islander community and help us with new tools to combat that crime.

I, again, thank my colleagues. We all must work together to stop this kind of violence.

I thank the President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to join my colleague Senator CANTWELL in congratulating Senator HIRONO and all of us for almost unanimously passing this bill that would try to stop discrimination against Asian Americans. I am happy that passed. There was only one vote against it.

I just don’t think it goes far enough. I think it is ludicrous, it is odious to me, that in the year 2021, we have major universities in the United States of America that are setting quotas on their admissions for Asian Americans—not quotas to have enough Asian Americans, quotas to keep Asian Americans out. They are, and everybody in this body knows they are doing that.

Harvard is in litigation over it. Harvard officials have already stated that but for their quotas, there would be twice as many Asian Americans at Harvard as there are now if they base the decision solely on academic achievement. And that is wrong.

There is no way to discriminate in the right way. Discrimination is discrimination. Judge people on the basis of their academic achievements.

President Biden has talked an awful lot about the error of discriminating against Asian Americans, and he is absolutely right. What is the first thing he did? He pulled his Justice Department off of filing litigation to try to stop these quotas on Asian Americans

and universities. I mean, if there weren’t double standards around here, there would be no standards at all.

So I strongly encourage—Senator CRUZ and I offered an amendment to Senator HIRONO’s bill to try to fix this. Unfortunately, we couldn’t get 60 votes. In fact, I don’t think a single—maybe I am wrong in saying this, but not very many of my Democratic friends voted for it.

But I would say to President Biden, now, if you are serious about ending discrimination against Asian Americans, tell your Justice Department to get off its ice cold, lazy rear end and do something about it. Stop the quotas in higher education.

Anyway, that is not, really, what I came up to talk about.

DISPOSE UNUSED MEDICATIONS AND PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, you are aware, as we all are, of the scourge of opioid abuse in this country. It is horrible. It is terrible. We sometimes lose as many as 50,000 of our people a year.

And as you also know, many people who become addicted to opioids don’t necessarily buy the opioids on the street. They get the opioids from family and friends. So one of the best things you can do to try to stop the scourge of opioid abuse is to clear out your medicine cabinet so that people aren’t tempted to use the drugs. Turn them in, if they have been prescribed to you, and you don’t need them any longer.

To make this easier, our DEA, as you know, Mr. President, holds pretty regularly what we call Take Back Days. On a Take Back Day, any person can go into his or her medicine cabinet, find drugs, including opioids, that they are not using anymore, that could be dangerous if abused, and they can take those unused medications and drop them off at a previously announced DEA drop site.

Take Back Day is this Saturday, April 24. I want to encourage all Americans and Louisianans to do this. Go through your medicine cabinet. If you have opioids that have been prescribed to you—legally, of course—and you don’t need them any longer, don’t just leave them hanging around. Turn them in, please.

But not every day is Take Back Day, and last year Congress, in its wisdom, passed a law, a very good law, instructing the Department of Veterans Affairs to ask—well, actually to require—VA medical centers to have these drop boxes permanently so that American veterans can throw away medications, including but not limited to opioids, that they don’t need. And it has worked out really well.

The question that occurred to me after we passed the bill was why limit that kind of access only to our veterans. So I have a bill to basically open up the Veterans Administration drop

boxes for unused drugs, including but not limited to opioids, at VA medical centers to anybody who wants to go get rid of these unused drugs at any time. You don't have to wait until Take Back Day. This would be a permanent program.

The name of the bill is the Dispose Unused Medications and Prescription Opioids Act. And before I offer this bill up, let me just give one more plug. I would remind everyone that this Saturday, April 24, is Take Back Day. If you have unused medications, including opioids, that you want to get rid of, it will have been publicized in your community by the DEA. You can go drop them off, and I hope people will do that.

Mr. President, toward that end, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be discharged from further consideration of my bill, S. 957, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 957) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ensure that certain medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs have physical locations for the disposal of controlled substances medications.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I further ask that the Kennedy substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to, that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1459) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

[Purpose: In the nature of a substitute]

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION OF PERIODS DURING WHICH ANY INDIVIDUAL MAY DISPOSE OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES MEDICATIONS AT FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 3009 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315; 38 U.S.C. 8110 note) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) and (c) as subsections (c) and (d), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

“(b) DESIGNATION OF PERIODS FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL TO DISPOSE OF MEDICATION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall designate periods during which any individual may dispose of controlled substances medications at a covered Department medical facility.

“(2) PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS.—The Secretary may carry out public information campaigns regarding the periods designated under paragraph (1).”

The bill (S. 957), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. KENNEDY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DRINKING WATER AND WASTE-WATER INFRASTRUCTURE ACT OF 2021—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

SEACOR POWER LIFT BOAT

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, the year 2020 was a year filled with sadness and grief for me, but, unfortunately, that sadness and grief struck again in the year 2021.

Last Tuesday, 100-mile-per-hour winds capsized a lift boat with a crew of 19 off the coast of Grand Isle, LA, just south of Port Fourchon. The U.S. Coast Guard and a group of Good Samaritan boats rescued six crew members as winds continued between 80 to 90 miles per hour and waves were 7 to 9 feet high.

The Coast Guard credits those Good Samaritans with saving four of the six rescued crew members. So, fortunately, in the midst of a terrible tragedy, it turns out a crew of Coast Guard men and women were on a boat doing a trial run when the SOS went out. And although technically not Coast Guard, they were coastguardsmen, and they went out and aided in the rescue. We are eternally grateful for their efforts, their hard work, and for the risk they took to themselves to bring those crew members back to shore safely, who returned safely.

In this tragedy, which affects us in Louisiana but, in a sense, affects us all, any loss of life is heartbreaking. But there are some who may not be found, and we pray their families find closure. To date, six have been confirmed dead, including Anthony Hartford of New Orleans, James “Tracy” Wallingsford of Gilbert, Captain David Ledet of Thibodaux, Ernest Williams of Arnaudville, Lawrence Warren of Terrytown, and Quinon Pitre of Franklin.

Seven are still missing. Each day that passes, the prognosis—the chance of finding them—obviously decreases. I would like to take a moment to recognize those still missing:

Jay Guevara, Dylan Dasput, Gregory Walcott, Chaz Morales, Jason Krell, Darren Encalade, and Chris Rozands.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the crew members of the capsized vessel, their loved ones, and their communities.

While we mourn this loss, we also rise to recognize the heroic efforts of the Coast Guard, the Good Samaritans, and all involved in the search-and-rescue efforts that continued for 6 straight days.

In just 40 hours, the Coast Guard covered more than 1,440 square miles of the Gulf of Mexico, searching for missing crew members. To put that in perspective, that is an area larger than the State of Rhode Island. By Friday, this area grew to a size larger than Hawaii, searching through sea and air.

Late last week, the National Transportation Safety Board announced they will open an investigation. The team arrived in New Orleans on Thursday, and a preliminary report will be released within the next 2 weeks.

We deeply appreciate the volunteers who assisted the men and women from the Coast Guard and many others in the search and rescue, particularly during the terrible weather. In the light of this tragedy, this team effort demonstrates the best of humanity.

We grieve with the families. We shall always remember the lives of those we lost.

May God watch over their souls. May they find eternal peace.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I bring news back from Oklahoma to this body and a request for dialogue. The COVID bill that was passed a little over a month ago—that bill provided all kinds of relief. As this body knows, we were deeply divided on that bill and some of the issues within it.

One of the issues stretched out the debate all the way to the last moment, and it was the additional unemployment assistance. The conversation about the additional unemployment assistance is this: The economy is reopening. Is this the time to extend additional money above and beyond State unemployment assistance, what we normally do? With unemployment rates going down, should we add more money on top of it?

No one really knew what would happen when that occurred, but we had some suspicions. The 2 weeks I spent traveling around the State, the week before Easter and after Easter, in town after town after town after town after town, I heard the same thing from employees and employers.

Employees would tell me that somebody who used to work next to them is now at home because they are making as much money at home on unemployment assistance as they would when working. So the person standing there working at the factory, the person standing there working at the restaurant is ticked off at the person who is at home watching TV, making as much money as they are.